

Steinmetz' Handwriting,
Etc.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NATIONAL UNITY.

Charles P. Steinmetz.

~~Whether we believe in it or not, we must concede~~
~~that War~~ requires the supreme effort of a united nation,

to be brought to a successful, that is, an honorable ending. *This even the most extreme opponent of war as a method of settling international disputes must concede.*

We are at war but we are not as united as desirable
for the present and future safety of our nation. The
last years were perhaps the darkest period in our nation's
history; a time of mutual recrimination, where differences of
opinion between citizens, such as must and should occur in a
democratic nation, were exaggerated into national crimes, and
thus thoughtlessness and sensationalism were allowed to foment
race hatred and disunion, until ^{many thousands} ~~millions~~ of our best citizens
have been insulted as hyphenates, ^{other thousands} ~~millions~~ of our leading
citizens called British colonials, allegations freely made of
citizens more loyal to foreign nations than to our country, *or*
more interested in their own financial and business profits
than our nation's welfare.

There has been no proof nor evidence of this, but
it had its effect, and the attitude of the masses of our
nation towards the present war is not the same as it was
twenty years ago in the Spanish war.

This is the most serious national problem: Unity.

The military problems of the war, huge as they are for our unprepared nation, sink into insignificance compared with the economic problems which our nation will have to face during the war and still more so after the war, in the reconstruction of a new world on the ruins of the old. It is then, when the patriotic excitement of war time has gone and people again begin to look primarily after their own individual interests, that the greatest danger will come, and nations, which have solidly stood through the strain of the world's war, may break down and fail in disaster in the economic re-organization of peace.

Thus, if it is said, that peace is the time to prepare for war, then more still, war is the time to prepare for peace, as many things can be done and are done promptly under the stress of war, which are difficult to accomplish in peace time.

To feed the nation, and feed the world, is the problem before ^{which} everything else ^{pulls} ~~pulls~~, and steadily the balance turns against us: our national resources have under ^{our} wasteful use dwindled away; our population is steadily increasing, while the fertility of our farms is decreasing by exhaustion, and when our crops become increasingly deficient, it is not an accident, but the inevitable beginning of the end, the end of

our living by plundering our national resources. If in the future we wish to feed our own population, to say nothing of Europe's hundreds of millions, we must increase the productivity of our farms to anywhere near that, what for instance Germany raises from farms which have been under cultivation for a thousand years.

In the early days of our nation, British colonies predominated, and America was largely an Anglo-Saxon nation. But then came the great streams of immigrants, attracted by the opportunities, and invited, because the country needed their labor, skill and knowledge. First they scattered, assimilated and vanished amongst the natives. But later they remained more together, and their assimilation became imperfect, until now ^{there} ~~they~~ are racial differences in our country, and - ^{though} ~~thus~~ in gross exaggeration. — It has been called a boarding house of foreign nations. But what to do? To drive out the immigrants, to restore national uniformity? They are in the majority, and we need them. Or to surrender to them? Hardly! Besides, they could not agree amongst themselves. Thus the solution, to escape national disintegration, is assimilation.

Whose fault is the present situation, but that of the natives, who controlled the country when the masses of

immigrants came. They permitted them to mass together, paid no attention to the potential danger of the failure of complete Americanization, but were busy with their own interests; and besides, un-Americanized, the immigrants were a more tractable and cheaper labor supply.

But it is equally the fault of the immigrants. They came to a new country to make their home. Thus it was their duty to fit themselves into the nation which they joined, take an active part in its affairs.

But again, it was neither's fault, but was the trend of the times, of the individualistic age, which is now passing away in the world's conflagration. Everybody for himself, and the devil take the hindmost, was the slogan, which has ruined Europe, and which has left us, in the failure of unifying our nation, the problem which we now have to solve by systematic effort, to bring about the American nation.

After all, when considering that our citizens and future citizens are descended from all the nations, which so viciously fight each other in Europe, it is rather remarkable, how little dissension and hostility, relatively, exists between them in our country, and this speaks for the powerful Americanizing tendency of our nation, and is a most encouraging sign, showing that with some intelligent and systematic effort towards co-operation and assimilation, national unity can be brought about.

It is true, it has become the fashion amongst some, to decry the possibility of assimilation of races, and to claim that there never can be an American race, and these people point to Central Europe, where the racial characteristics of long heads and broad heads still persist, though the races have been living together since pre-historic times. But this is one of those generalizations far beyond the limits of the scientific facts underlying the situation, which have become popular in our age, by their sensationalism, but hardly have any standing. We may point to France, which is possibly the most homogeneous nation, and still in it have mixed the Celt and the Roman, the Frank and the Norseman.

Thus, while the unfortunate ^{incidents} ~~immigrants~~ of the last years undoubtedly have been a serious set back, there is an American nation, and there is an American race forming, and the realization of the problem, the assistance given by systematic effort towards Americanization, the increasing co-operative spirit of the modern world, assure the success.

Our convention's purpose is to discuss the ways and means, to consider the methods of speedily bringing about a complete national unity.

Our program must be positive and negative: positive in doing everything, and assisting in everything which tends towards National Unity; negative in opposing everything which tends towards disunion.